



Tips for Black Bass Anglers in Maryland



This guide highlights four simple things tidal black bass anglers can do to keep their black bass alive.

The number one problem with keeping bass alive is in transporting them. Live fish will be stressed in any transport container. Stress is compounded by angling and environmental conditions. Minimize stress of the fish and you'll increase its chance of survival. You can reduce stress on the fish by maintaining healthy conditions in live wells and transport tanks.

Wipe down live wells and transport tanks thoroughly before using them

Organic material, such as mud or grass, that remains in the live well can reduce dissolved oxygen in the live well. Bacteria that break-down the organic material use oxygen. As a result, it's more difficult to maintain dissolved oxygen levels. In addition, cleaning live wells also helps to prevent transmission of disease or bacterial infections. For these reasons, we also recommend immediate removal of dead fish from the live wells.

Use an effective culling strategy

Use non-invasive clips or mesh bags that do not wound the skin. Quickly weigh fish and release fish, if it is to be culled. Do not expose the fish to air for longer than a minute because important tissues of the fish can dry, possibly leading to suffocation and death. In our tidal waters, plastic clips may be preferred over metal ones because metal can rust. Clips are preferred over pins that puncture the skin. A cull bag can be used to either weigh the fish and/or separate fish in the live well.

Use a combination of ice and water exchanges to keep live well temperature within 5 – 7 ° F of the water temperature (2-3' below surface)

*Check river temperature at mddnr.chesapeakebay.net/eyesonthebay/index.cfm. Measure water temperature in your live well or transport tank before transporting bass. Use ice to lower water temperature as necessary, **but do not overcool**. If you do overcool, remove ice and: a) expose water to sunlight for gradual warming; or b) partially exchange well or tank water with water from the surrounding habitat. Because the addition of more bass to tanks will warm water, you must regularly check temperature and adjust temperature with ice when necessary.*

Time to Upgrade the Live Well

- 1) Buy a thermometer for your live well. Pet stores sell them for as low as \$2 for aquaria.
- 2) Invest in an effective culling system. Consider firm plastic clips that do not puncture skin, or a bag that does not irritate fish. For more information, navigate to: Quik-Cull (\$25.00; www.quik-cull.com); Bag-Em (\$20.50; www.bag-em.com); Glorybags (\$69.00; www.glorybags.com).
- 3) A dissolved oxygen meter makes a great gift, but is not cheap. For serious bass anglers who fish all day during summer, a meter should be part of the tackle box. For more information:

YSI DO200 Dissolved Oxygen/Temperature Meter (item # 76701; \$245.00) and membrane kit (item # 76359; \$49.00) at Forestry Suppliers;

Extech DO600 ExStiK II Waterproof Dissolved Oxygen Meter (\$299.00) or Kit (\$339.00) at Forestry Suppliers: 1-800-752-8460 and www.forestry-suppliers.com (item Number: 76055 or 76059);

Sper digital DO/Temp Meter (\$325.00 at Carolina Biological Supplies: 1800-334-5551 and www.carolina.com).

MD DNR staff will be happy to show you how to quickly measure dissolved oxygen accurately. Contact: Dr. Joe Love, jlove@dnr.state.md.us or 410-260-8257

Use an aerator, continuous recirculation, half-water exchanges (every 3 hours), and compressed oxygen (if possible) to keep dissolved oxygen near 100% saturation or 8 ppm

If a large fish is floundering, then there's probably a problem with oxygen. To keep the big fish alive, isolate it to its own tank, add more oxygen, or release it immediately to the habitat. There are serious fire and explosive related hazards associated with handling compressed oxygen; so pay attention if using compressed oxygen

To keep good water quality in the live well, exchange tank water with good quality water, usually clear water in submerged vegetation areas or water with high flow or current (e.g., mid-channels).

*If your live well stops working, then try this: 1) Every 15 minutes, bucket 1/3 of water from the live well and replace it with fresh water from 3 feet deep; 2) Divide fish between live wells; and 3) If the fish dies, put the fish on ice and bring it home – **do not release dead fish to the environment**.*

In Summary:

1. Immediately put dead fish in cooler;
2. Effectively and non-invasively cull fish;
3. Measure Temperature: Use ice and water exchanges to maintain water temperature;
4. Measure DO: Always use aerator and recirculation when bass are in live well; exchanging water every 3 hours flushes out harmful chemicals, like excreted ammonia